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C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 000555

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [BG](#) [IQ](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR-PM ZIA MEETING

REF: A. DHAKA 0554 (NOTAL)

[B](#). STATE 17170 (NOTAL)

[C](#). DHAKA 0362

Classified By: Ambassador Harry K. Thomas, reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (SBU) On February 7, Ambassador called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to discuss her request for U.S. law enforcement consultants in the investigation of the January 27 attack that killed Awami League leader, and former finance minister, Shah Kibria (ref a). Also present were P/E counselor (notetaker), PMO Principal Secretary Kamaluddin Siddiqui, PMO Political Secretary Haris Chowdhury, and PMO Press Secretary Tajul Islam. Ambassador also raised the below topics.

RAB

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[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador expressed serious concerns about the "crossfire" killings committed by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and other police units, and reviewed the implications for the BDG of the Leadhy amendment (ref b). All suspects, he said, have the right to due process. Zia replied that "crossfire" is a media misnomer for battles between RAB and criminals. The police, she maintained, have the right to defend themselves. Ambassador stressed: "We want the extra-judicial killings to end."

Iraq Election

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[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador urged Bangladesh, as a democratic country, to issue a statement praising the election in Iraq and the courage of the Iraqi people in defying terrorist intimidation to exercise their democratic rights. He noted that many countries, including Pakistan and India, have already issued statements. Zia indicated support for a statement. (Note: We have also pressed MFA for a statement. At a small dinner the night before, PMO Political Secretary Chowdhury assured us the BDG would make such a statement. We will follow up with MFA and Chowdhury.)

UN Counter-Terrorism Conventions

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[1](#)4. (C) Ambassador reiterated our request for the BDG, which has adhered to three conventions, to adhere to the remaining nine. Zia indicated agreement but had no substantive response.

IMF Program

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[1](#)5. (C) Citing recent newspaper reports, Ambassador observed that the BDG is having trouble dealing with the financial and political costs of privatizing the first state-owned bank under its IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility program. Since IMF funds are important to Bangladesh, he said, the BDG should work on alternative proposals that would address both IMF and BDG objectives. "Tell them to wait two years," Zia joked, alluding to the general election expected in early [1](#)2007. She agreed, however, that the BDG should pursue alternative proposals.

THOMAS